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Peace--and the Revolution

THE coming peace conference will only incidentally be a conference to discuss peace; it will largely be a conference to discuss action on the Revolution in Russia and in Germany,—to prevent a general European revolution.

The Conference, whether completely imperialistic, partly imperialistic, or "liberal," will still determine peace terms on the basis of Capitalism and Imperialism. But it is precisely the fact of Capitalism that makes it impossible to really heal the wounds of the war and bring a lasting peace.

War was a method for the solution of the complex problems of Capitalism produced by the epoch of Imperialism: the fettering of production by national frontiers, the necessity of national Capitalism becoming international, the struggle for investment markets and undeveloped territory, the process of one nation increasing its own economic opportunity only by necessarily limiting the economic opportunity of other nations. But these problems are insoluble, under Capitalism, which is a mass of contradictions; and war, instead of solving these old problems, has complicated them and produced new problems of larger scope. War appears to Capitalism as the method of solving its contradictions; the method of the proletariat is necessarily Social Revolution, the overthrow of Capitalism.

The proletariat in Russia and in Germany have resorted to the revolutionary method; the European proletariat generally is preparing to use the revolutionary method.

The one attitude that might avert immediate revolution in Europe is the "liberal" attitude, by the European governments adopting the policy of no annexations and no indemnities. The United States, which requires no annexations and no indemnities (because of its peculiar position and because its peace policy is to maintain the balance of power in Europe: neither an aggrandized Germany nor a destroyed Germany, neither an aggrandized Britain nor a destroyed Britain), is pursuing the "liberal" policy. But the European nations inevitably must press for annexations and indemnities: they have to dangle the tangible "fruits of victory" in the eyes of their people, who have agonized for—what? They must, moreover, promote their own Imperialism as the only means of healing the wounds of the war—on the basis of Capitalism.

And so Great Britain proposes to retain the German colonies, exact a crushing indemnity to cover the cost of the war, and maintain its naval supremacy; France insists upon a still huger indemnity, the annexation of the left bank of the Rhine (indisputably German territory) and perhaps a share of the German colonies and Syria; Belgium insists upon "recovering" former "Belgian territory" now a part of Holland; Italy's imperialistic appetite has already produced a clash with the Jugo-Slavs; while the "smaller nations" are at each other's throats, each acting as if one's own national independence is promoted only by crushing the independence of some other "small nationality."

But to impose a huge indemnity upon Germany means to crush Germany industrially, in which event Germany could not pay the indemnity; to lessen the indemnity and allow Germany to recover means to produce financial and industrial complications in the other nations; and the attempt to straighten out this contradiction will make the "peace-conferrees" sweat,—while it will compel the intervention of the revolutionary proletariat.

Moreover, all the measures comprised in annexations and indemnities are of profit to Capitalism alone, to the industrial and financial magnates, to the oppressors of labor. A peace on the basis of Capitalism will heal the wounds of capital, but never of labor; only Social Revolution can heal the agonizing wounds inflicted upon the proletariat by the war.

Great Britain, France and Italy—their Capitalism—are determined upon exacting the final measure of tribute from Germany; but this attitude will undoubtedly accelerate the revolutionary process, convincing the German proletariat that Social Revolution is the

only way out; and the definite completion of the proletarian revolution in Germany might inspire the proletariat of the other nations to act, might even eventuate in a new revolutionary war; and in this crisis, the proletariat of France and Italy, perhaps of Great Britain, would prove a natural ally of the Russian and German proletariat—and the general European revolution flare up into action. And if Great Britain, France and Italy relinquish annexations and indemnities, then their financial problems will become disastrously heavy, they will have to impose immediately new burdens upon the proletariat, the mockery of the war will taunt the proletariat and action toward revolution develop.

Real reconstruction can proceed only on a Socialist basis. Precisely as capital used the opportunity of war to enrich itself and oppress labor, so capital will use the opportunity of reconstruction to enrich itself and oppress labor. Moreover, to really reconstruct, it is necessary that there be a release of the giant forces of production; but capital cannot allow this: it will limit reconstruction within the bounds of production for profit. Under Capitalism, reconstruction must first consider the profits of capital, and then the needs of the people. State control of reconstruction will not help, since the state is the state of the bourgeois masters. At its worst, Capitalism will use reconstruction to sweat blood out of the proletariat; at its best, Capitalism tries to potter with "liberal" proposals of reconstruction, but is aghast at the giant problems, wrecked on the rock of class necessity.

The peace conference cannot solve these problems; and as it reveals the ineptitude of the representatives of Capitalism ("liberal" and "conservative") and proposes action against the Revolution, the European proletariat will swell the chorus: Peace with revolution!

Imperialism, which is the final stage of Capitalism and a desperate, futile attempt to solve the multiplying contradictions of Capitalism, has objectively introduced the social-revolutionary epoch; and this social-revolutionary epoch has been subjectively introduced by the proletarian revolution in Russia and Germany. . . .

Peace with revolution—that was the slogan of the Bolsheviks in Russia, that is now the slogan of the German Bolsheviks, that is the slogan of the developing forces of revolutionary Socialism in all European nations.

Peace with revolution—and it is the task of the American proletariat to prevent interference in the revolutionary determination of Europe's destiny.

We learn from the newspapers that "German spies fail to convince Negroes." As a matter of fact it seems to us that they failed to convince anybody of anything, except, of course, the newspapers whom they convinced that all German spies were Socialists, and the Department of Justice, whom they convinced that the best way to stop German espionage was to jail all the Socialists and leave the spies alone.

Congress has appointed a committee to investigate the National Security League. If the result of the investigation turns out to be half as bad as the result of the National Security League's investigation of Congress, somebody is bound to go to jail.

No Answer Yet!

Asserting that United States troops were fighting the Russians without any declaration of war, Senator Hiram Johnson, Republican, introduced a resolution in the Senate, December 12, calling for an investigation of the Russian situation and asking data from the State Department. Senator Johnson asked the following questions, all of which are true:

"Is it true that the Soviet Government offered to the American Government a basis of co-operation, economic and military and sought the help of the American Government to prevent the ratification of the shameful treaty of Brest, and that the American Government never replied to this offer?"

"Is it true that the Russian Soviet Government offered, through its highest economic council, a program for making America the most favored foreign nation in trade and commerce and involving the control by the Allies of all those supplies most desired by the Central Empires?"

"Is it true that the Department of State has refused to allow the American Red Cross to ship supplies to Moscow and Petrograd for the relief of the returning Russian war prisoners from Germany?"

"Is it true that refusal of these recommendations prevented the evacuation of large amounts of munitions and war supplies from the eastern front that subsequently were captured by the Germans in their advance after the Brest negotiations had failed?"

Asking if America might be partly responsible for starvation and terrorism in Russia, Senator Johnson wanted to know whether this country's purpose was to war against revolution in all countries "to prevent the agitation for revolution from spreading."

Referring to what he termed "strange modifications" of armistice terms delaying withdrawal of German troops from Russia, Senator Johnson asked:

"Can it be that the German-bribed Bolsheviks acting in conjunction with Germany, . . . must be kept in order by German troops?"

"If a league of nations was to be formed upon any such motives it will degenerate into a holy alliance. A policy of military intervention, supporting one Government here and another there, one faction in one part and one faction in another, will but encourage every revolutionary group.

"The extraordinary amount of misinformation given to the American people concerning Russia almost justifies the belief that there has been a regular and consistent propaganda of misrepresentation. The Creel Bureau of Public Information has apparently been engaged, not in developing facts to our people, but in justifying a course subsequently pursued at variance with our words. Solemnly we promised that we would not, by hostile invasion intervene. We did, after our solemn promise, just that thing, and then in the sequence of events, apparently, the duty developed on the Creel bureau to justify the broken promise.

"As calmly we weigh what has been transpiring in Austria and Germany, as we observe the insidious propaganda and the poison of Bolshevism emanating from Russia, which have gone to the very core of the autocracy of the central empires, can we be satisfied with the Creel committee's labored efforts to demonstrate that the Bolsheviks are German agents?"